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PROBABLE COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO US OPTION C OR C-PRIME MEASURES

A. To Initial US Moves (as described in the sequential graduated actions, Nos. 3-b-(1) to (6), p. 9, of JCSM 982-64, of 23 November 1964)

1. We consider it highly unlikely that these moves would cause Communist China to react in any extreme fashion at this juncture.

2. We consider it unlikely that the DRV would react in any extreme fashion at this juncture.

3. We also consider it unlikely that the DRV would yield or take any significant steps in that direction.

4. The most likely DRV course would be to hold firm.

a. The DRV would attempt to defend DRV territory.

Defensive action by aircraft from Phue Yen airfield would be possible but we consider it unlikely because of the nature of the contemplated US actions and the distance of these actions from the Phue Yen airbase. In Laos, PL/VM forces would attempt to counter US/GVN air attacks and cross-border operations; the DRV would probably raise its level of assistance to these PL/VM forces, though would probably not introduce any significant numbers of PAVN units.

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b. Hanoi would probably direct the VC to continue its pressures in the South but might make some moves toward negotiation or ostensible compliance. We doubt that the VC would launch any large-scale frontal assaults, but they probably would undertake reprisals on US personnel and facilities identified with US/GVN activities, and on other targets in South Vietnam.

c. Hanoi and Peiping would meanwhile almost certainly do their utmost to stimulate condemnation of the US attacks in world opinion, and, if negotiations began, would take tough initial positions.

d. Hanoi and Peiping would increase their threats to counterattacks and both would probably undertake force deployments designed to add to the credibility of these threats. Hanoi would certainly appeal for additional Chinese Communist defensive assistance -- radar, anti-aircraft, artillery, combat aircraft, patrol craft, and technical personnel -- which Peiping would probably supply. We doubt that Hanoi would request Chinese Communist ground troops at this juncture.

5. The USSR would make propaganda and political efforts on behalf of the DRV, and perhaps consent to furnish some military equipment, but would almost certainly take steps to insure that Hanoi and Peiping were kept aware of the limits of Soviet support.

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B. To Higher-Scale US Option C or C-Prime Moves

(as described in items (7)

to (11), p. 9, of JCSM 982-64,

of 23 November 1964)

We cannot make a confident judgment of enemy reactions in these situations, although we incline to these views:

6. To the first categories of such US moves (i.e., items (7) to (9): air strikes against selected targets in the DRV, aerial mining of certain DRV ports, and imposition of a naval quarantine blockade):

a. DRV reactions would probably be essentially defensive in character: that is, employing all available air defense, including aircraft, in defense of DRV territory. DRV forces would probably also attempt to harass naval blockade vessels. The DRV would probably not attempt any overt invasion of Laos or South Vietnam, although they might re-deploy some units to southern North Vietnam.

b. The DRV would probably make some moves toward apparent compliance, but would probably not be prepared to make any early significant concessions.

c. The DRV would nevertheless probably modulate VC pressures, feigning innocence, by turning VC pressures up or down,

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depending on the prospects for negotiations, US punishment, and the course of the war in the South. Unless the collapse of GVN authority seemed imminent, we doubt that the DRV would direct the VC to attempt to administer a military coup de grâce.

d. The DRV, with Communist bloc support, would attempt to raise a hue and cry in the world against the US, including propaganda, diplomatic actions, and incitement of mob demonstrations. Hanoi and Peiping would probably consider that US mining and/or blockading of DRV ports would be especially susceptible to propaganda exploitation.

e. Extreme Chinese Communist reaction -- such as introduction of large-scale ground force combat units into North Vietnam -- would be possible at this juncture, though unlikely. Peiping would probably make its threats of intervention stronger and more specific. If it had not already done so, it would almost certainly deploy large forces to areas near Vietnam and Laos. It is possible that Chinese Communist air units, under the guise of "volunteers," would at this point be introduced into North Vietnam, for use from North Vietnamese airfields. It is also possible that Peiping would commit units of its air force based in China to defensive action over North Vietnam at this point, but

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in view of the magnitude of US air and naval superiority we doubt that Peiping would do so.\* There is a fair chance, however, that Peiping would introduce limited numbers of Chinese Communist ground forces as "volunteers," both to prepare for further escalation and to make clear Peiping's commitment to assist the North Vietnamese.

f. As the scale of operations increased, the USSR also would be strongly and publicly on the side of the DRV, would probably give it additional military and economic assistance, and might issue dire threats against the US. We believe nevertheless that the USSR would be careful to avoid an appreciable risk of becoming directly involved in military conflict, and would greatly prefer that the Indochina problem be settled by compromise. To this end the Soviets would seek to augment international pressures on the US to bring it to the conference table.

g. We do not believe that either Communist China or the USSR would stir up another major crisis threatening military confrontation elsewhere in the world while the proposed US actions in North Vietnam were underway.

\* The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, believes that the increasingly severe US air strikes contemplated against DRV targets north of the 19th parallel would probably evoke the employment over North Vietnam of Chinese air from Chinese bases. The Chinese decision to construct the new Ming airstrip, carefully located just over the DRV border and operationally ready in early 1965, already strongly suggests Chinese preparation to test US adherence to the privileged sanctuary concept.

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7. To the Upper Categories of Option C or C-Prime Moves  
(i.e., items (1) and (11), p. 10, of JCSM 982-64, of 23 November 1964: attacks on the balance of the 94-List Targets, and amphibious or airborne operations to seize coastal lodgments in the DRV):

a. In response to the moves in Item 10 Communist reactions would probably hinge in important measure on Peiping's decisions. We believe that Communist China would be very reluctant to become directly involved in the fighting in Indochina lest this be taken by the US as a cause for major retaliation against the Chinese mainland. Nevertheless, at this point Chinese Communist aircraft operating from Chinese bases would probably assist in defending North Vietnam against the US attacks. We still believe that there would not be high risk of the introduction of large-scale Chinese ground combat units into Vietnam. Nevertheless, there is always a chance that Peiping might so intervene either for reasons that seem irrational to us or because it miscalculated the objectives of US moves in the area. Communist China's capability for conducting a ground war in adjacent areas of Southeast Asia is formidable.

b. If the US actions proceeded to the moves in Item 11 and involved major US/GVN ground units occupying territory in northern Laos, the risk of introduction of large-scale Chinese Communist ground combat units into Vietnam would materially increase.

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These risks would be similarly increased if the Chinese had committed their air forces from Chinese bases, and had subsequently suffered US attacks on these bases.

c. In the circumstances of Items 10 and 11, and if Peiping had refrained from extreme rescue measures, the DRV's leaders would probably intensify their efforts to negotiate. Here again their particular negotiating game would depend heavily on how the course of events had gone meanwhile in the South; if the GVN were getting along fairly successfully, Hanoi would probably seek to negotiate as good a settlement as it could, hoping to subvert it at a later date; if, however, non-Communist authority had about been caved in, Hanoi would probably stall, seeking to salvage a position of strength in the anomolous situation of US success in the North, DRV in the South.

d. In the event Hanoi felt assured of Chinese Communist rescue, it would probably fight on. In such a situation, there would be considerable risk of DRV invasion of South Vietnam or Laos, of Chinese Communist extreme action at various places in Southeast Asia, and of an entirely new war situation developing.\*

\* INR believes that the Chinese Communists, despite their reluctance to become involved in fighting the US, would feel it necessary to assure Hanoi of its support and to come to Hanoi's assistance as the situation required. INR believes, therefore, that there is a greater chance that the DRV would at this point respond as described in paragraph (d) than as described in paragraph (c).

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PROBABLE COMMUNIST REACTIONS TO US OPTION B MEASURES

8. We are similarly unable to estimate confidently what Communist reactions would be to Option B measures. The quickness and severity of the US actions would doubtless shock the DRV and sharply lessen its capability to react in sudden extreme form. The risks of further escalation in Southeast Asia would be considerable. We are unable to make a confident estimate as to whether the risks of such escalation would be greater in the case of Option B, C, or C-Prime. All things considered, we incline to the view that although the DRV and Communist Chinese leaders might have attempted to increase the Communist military commitment substantially in the Vietnam area, in response to US Option B measures, they would in the end result react substantially as described in paragraph 7 above (reactions to C or C-Prime upper-level measures).\*

\* INR reserves its position on this paragraph.

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## NON-COMMUNIST REACTIONS

### A. Reactions in South Vietnam

1. The initial reaction would probably be one of elation, in the belief that the US was at last bringing its great power to bear against the enemy. Such attitudes would persist in the event that VC activity noticeably diminished or if the DRV soon indicated a serious interest in a cease-fire and negotiations. The South Vietnamese would be given a great psychological boost, and we would probably see at least a spurt of much more effective GVN military and administrative performance.

2. Initial South Vietnamese elation and support would almost certainly quickly wane, however, if the war seemed to drag on despite the new US moves, and especially if the VC were able to increase their military and terrorist pressures. In such event, the belief would almost certainly rapidly spread that eventual DRV/VC victory was inevitable, that the US was unable or unwilling to save the situation, and that prudence dictated early accommodation. In such an atmosphere, VC exploitive efforts would bear considerable fruit.

3. VC Tactics and Capabilities. The general level of VC activity -- whether more, less, or about as at present -- would of course be the result of Hanoi's basic decision of the moment as to

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how to respond to the US attacks. Involved in such decision would be Hanoi's estimate of the fragility of the political situation in the South and whether "victory" might be quickly attained by a short, sudden burst. Available intelligence data do not warrant a confident estimate of VC "burst" capabilities, but we incline to the view that the VC does have military capabilities it has not yet committed. This may also be the case with VC terrorism, subversion, and political action, though we feel that any "unused" capabilities in these fields are less than in the case of the military. In any event, the VC would be hesitant to commit large-scale VC forces for fear that the GVN, with US assistance, could chew up such military units much more effectively than it has small VC groups. The VC, accordingly, would probably not attempt to administer such a coup de grace unless the demise of Saigon's authority appeared to be imminent.

B. Reactions Elsewhere in the World

4. The reactions of the non-aligned states, and even of some US Allies, to increased US military initiatives would tend to be adverse. The more severe the attacks were, and the longer they lasted, the greater and more articulate the adverse reaction would be. Such reactions would be mitigated considerably if the moves appeared to achieve US objectives, and in any case some governments would be privately more sympathetic to the US than would appear in their public stance or in public opinion media.

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5. The most important non-Communist reactions would be those of the Asian states and of France and the UK.

a. In the Republic of Korea, the Republic of China, the Philippines, and Thailand there would be considerable elation that the US had adopted a tough new line which might check or cut back Communist expansion. These Allies could probably be counted upon to lend some active support, use of bases, etc., to the US effort, but to balk at any US efforts to enlist their support for a negotiated settlement. The Japanese Government, and conservative opinion in Japan, would be pleased by US action against the DRV that was both successful and limited. The Japanese Government would probably attempt to avoid any direct involvement which would be likely to provoke strong adverse domestic pressures and complicate relations with Communist China. To this end, it would probably seek to minimize the direct use of US bases in Japan in support of such an operation.

b. The Indian Government, and considerable informed opinion in India, would probably be quietly pleased by the US toughness, but the official Indian line would doubtless be one pressing for a quick end to hostilities and for US entry into negotiations. Prince Sihanouk would probably be the most troublesome neutralist, but his position would largely depend on his estimate of

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which was the stronger side. Sukarno can be confidently expected to lend at least verbal support to the Communist cause.

c. In the event US actions against the DRV were accompanied by an apparent US willingness to negotiate, the UK would probably give us strong private support and would probably avoid taking any public stance which would tend to undermine the US position. The French would be likely to criticize US military action and would reassert their long-standing proposal for reconvening the Geneva conference.

6. Longer-term world reactions would be influenced by the success of the US sanctions: if they halted Communist expansion in Indochina and led to an easing of tensions, US firmness would be retrospectively admired, as in the Chinese offshore islands and Cuba missile showdowns.

7. The US would probably find itself progressively isolated in the event the US sanctions did not soon achieve either a Communist reduction of pressures in South Vietnam or some progress toward meaningful negotiations, and would almost certainly find itself substantially alone in the event that the crisis developed to the point where a US-Communist Chinese war seemed imminent. The GRC would probably back the US wholeheartedly and wish to participate.

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Such Allies as the Philippines and Thailand would probably go along with the US, seeing no acceptable alternative open to them. Reactions of other US Allies would depend in part upon the manner in which the situation had developed.

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